

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----003972 091104Z /23

O R 091022Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3530  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7307

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGOV IS US  
SUBJ: TAKING WEIZMAN'S TEMPERATURE

REF.: TEL AVIV 6998

1. EZER WEIZMAN'S STATE OF MIND HAS DETERIORATED IN RECENT WEEKS. SINCE HIS POLITICAL BLUNDER IN CALLING FOR A WALL-TO-WALL GOVERNMENT, THE DEFENSE MINISTER HAS WITHDRAWN FROM MUCH PUBLIC CONTACT AND UNTIL THIS WEEK HAD DISAPPEARED FROM THE FRONT PAGES. WEIZMAN OFTEN NOW SEEMS TIRED AND EDGY, WHICH, WE BELIEVE, REFLECTS A DEEP GENERALIZED SENSE OF FRUSTRATION. THIS MESSAGE SUGGESTS WHY.

2. THE SADAT INITIATIVE. WEIZMAN, BEGINNING WITH HIS INITIAL PRIVATE MEETING WITH SADAT IN JERUSALEM, BEGAN TO SEE HIMSELF IN HISTORY BOOKS AS THE MAN WHO COULD MAKE PEACE WITH THE EGYPTIANS. HE INVESTED CONSIDERABLE EMOTIONAL CAPITAL IN ESTABLISHING RAPPORT WITH SADAT, TOOK HIS FAMILY TO CAIRO, AND BECAME CONVINCED FROM HIS SESSIONS WITH GAMASSY AND SADAT THAT HE WAS THE ONLY ISRAELI LEADER WHOSE PERSONALITY MESHED WELL ENOUGH WITH SADAT'S TO RETAIN HIS CONFIDENCE DURING DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS. YET, NEITHER  
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BEGIN NOR DAYAN TOOK HIM INTO THEIR CONFIDENCE CONCERNING NEGOTIATING STRATEGY. HE HAS INCREASINGLY CHAFED UNDER BEGIN'S TIGHT NEGOTIATING REIN. HE IS BEING EATEN AWAY AS HE WATCHES THE SADAT INITIATIVE RUNNING FURTHER INTO THE SAND BECAUSE OF WHAT HE SEES AS BEGIN'S IDEOLOGICAL INFLEXIBILITY, DAYAN'S "LOSS OF DRIVE" AND HIS "LONE WOLF" STYLE, AND THE ANACRONISTIC DOGMATISM OF HIS HERUT COLLEAGUES.

3. POLITICAL SETBACKS. IF BEGIN'S DECLINE, BOTH PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL (REFTEL), STARTED WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE JERUSALEM POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, THEN WEIZMAN'S BEGAN THE MORNING AFTER HE MADE HIS ILL-CONCEIVED PROPOSAL ON MARCH 24 FOR A "NATIONAL PEACE GOVERNMENT" TO REPLACE BEGIN'S CABINET. THIS PROPOSAL WAS HASTILY CONCOCTED, SIMPLISTIC AND REFLECTED WEIZMAN'S IMPULSIVENESS. HE IMMEDIATELY UNDERWENT AN AVALANCHE OF PUBLIC AND PARTY CRITICISM BECAUSE OF HIS PERCEIVED DISLOYALTY TO BEGIN. IN ADDITION, WEIZMAN HAS ALSO RECEIVED, ALONG WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, A LOT OF BITTER CONDEMNATION FROM THE LIKUD RIGHT-WINGERS. HE SHARES WITH BEGIN AND DAYAN BLAME FOR BEGIN'S HAVING INITIALLY CONCEDED TOO MUCH (ALL OF THE SINAI), THEREBY LOCKING HIMSELF INTO A NEGOTIATING POSITION FROM WHICH HE COULD NOT BARGAIN. AND IN THE MIDST OF THESE SHAFTS, WEIZMAN, UNLIKE BEGIN, DOES NOT POSSESS THE VETERAN POLITICIAN'S THICK HIDE. EZER IS DEPENDENT ON PEOPLE, ON THEIR APPROBATION AND ADULATION. HE HAS BEEN HURT BY THESE ATTACKS, AND HE SHOWS IT. THIS CRITICISM IS PARTICULARLY GALLING TO WEIZMAN BECAUSE HE IS STILL CONVINCED HE COULD REACH PEACE WITH SADAT IF GIVEN HIS HEAD. YET HE KNOWS HE CANNOT REPEAT HIS FOOLHARDY ATTEMPT TO BALDLY CHALLENGE BEGIN UNLESS THE POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES ARE EXACTLY RIGHT. AT PRESENT, HE FINDS HIMSELF INCREASINGLY ISOLATED FROM HIS OWN HERUT PARTY, ITS TACTICS AND ITS STRATEGY.

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4. SOUTH LEBANON. THE MARCH 15 INCURSION INTO SOUTH LEBANON WAS LARGELY WEIZMAN'S SHOW, WHICH HE CO-PRODUCED WITH EX-CHIEF OF STAFF MOTTA GUR. DAYAN WANTED NO PART OF IT AND DID NOT BOTHER TO HIDE HIS DISDAIN FOR THE WHOLE OPERATION. BEGIN GAVE WEIZMAN CARTE BLANCHE, LEAVING HIM WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A LARGE-SCALE INVOLVEMENT AND THE ROLE OF FALL-GUY AS PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAMPAIGN BECAME INCREASINGLY CRITICAL. OVER THESE MONTHS, HE NO DOUBT HAS EXPERIENCED A PSYCHIC DRAIN SUFFERED FROM LIVING WITH THE REALIZATION THAT IF TERRORIST ATTACKS FROM LEBANON BEGIN AGAIN, THE BLAME WILL FALL PRIMARILY ON HIM.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3531  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7307

EXDIS

5. WEIZMAN ALSO

CATCHES SOME OF THE BRUNT OF RECENT CRITICISM OF VARIOUS PROBLEMS FACING THE IDF. THE SUICIDE OF A RELIGIOUS RECRUIT HAS PROVOKED A STORM OF PROTEST CONCERNING EXCESSIVE HAZING AND CHARGES OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST DEVOUT SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY. FURTHER, THE SHORT-LIVED ADOPTION OF THE POLICY WHICH FROZE PRIVATE TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING WEST BANK LAND OWNED BY NON-RESIDENT PALESTINIANS WAS INEVITABLY PUT BY MANY AT WEIZMAN'S DOOR AND SYMBOLIZED WEIZMAN'S IDENTIFICATION WITH POTENTIALL CONTROVERSIAL GOI OCCUPATION POLICY.

6. A BUSY PACE. FINALLY, WEIZMAN'S FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE HAS BEEN A CRUSHER. HE MAY BE JUST GETTING PHYSICALLY WORN OUT.

7. DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE ENGINEERED BEGIN'S ELECTION VICTORY, WEIZMAN IS NOT A NATURAL POLITICIAN. HE TENDS TO SPEAK HIS MIND IN FRONT OF TOO MANY PEOPLE, WITHOUT REGARD TO POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES, AND HE FINDS IT ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT TO CURB HIS EMOTIONS ON ISSUES CLOSE TO HIS HEART. NONETHELESS, WE DOUBT THAT EZER IS ANYWHERE CLOSE TO RESIGNING. HE SEES HIMSELF AS BEGIN'S SUCCESSOR AND  
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THOSE CLOSE TO HIM SAY HE HAS SPOKEN MORE AND MORE OF THIS POSSIBILITY OF LATE. BUT IF HE IS TO ACHIEVE THIS AMBITION, HE MUST MEND SOME OF HIS HERUT FENCES AND CANNOT ANTAGONIZE THE LIBERALS. THOSE PARTIES REMAIN HIS ONLY FEASIBLE POLITICAL BASE FROM WHICH TO GRAB FOR THE GOLDEN RING. SO EZER WEIZMAN IS LYING LOW. HE IS EVEN TRYING FOR LESS FRICTION WITH ARIK SHARON.

8. BUT WEIZMAN REMAINS CAPABLE OF DRAMATIC SURPRISE. HE FLEW TO LONDON JUNE 7 AND BACK TO ISRAEL THE NEXT DAY WITH RUMORS ON BOTH ENDS OF A WEIZMAN MEETING WITH AN IMPORTANT ARAB. WEIZMAN TOLD THE AMBASSADOR RECENTLY THAT THERE WOULD BE CRITICAL NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN ISRAEL'S EGYPTIAN CONNECTION WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, AND OF COURSE WE WONDER WHETHER HIS VISIT TO LONDON WAS RELATED TO THAT PREDICTION.

9. IN ANY EVENT, WEIZMAN IS LIKELY TO BE CAUTIOUS IN NEXT MONDAY'S CABINET DISCUSSIONS. IN THE FACE OF PERCEIVED INTRANSIGENCE ON THE PART OF SADAT, IT WILL TAKE MUCH MORE THAN TWO CLARIFYING QUESTIONS FROM WASHINGTON TO PERSUADE EZER WEIZMAN THAT IT IS THE TIME TO CHALLENGE BEGIN'S AUTHORITY. HE IS LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT TO DO JUST THAT. WHAT DEPRESSES WEIZMAN IS HIS JUDGMENT THAT THAT MOMENT IS NOT NOW IN SIGHT, AND HE IS RIGHT. LEWIS

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